

REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the final Office Action dated July 17, 2006, issued in connection with the above-identified application. A request for continued examination (RCE) accompanies this Response. Presently, claims 1, 2, 5 and 7-13 are pending in the patent application. With this Response, claims 1 and 7-9 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced by this Response. Thus, favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Examiner Interview

The Applicants thank Examiner Roswell for granting the interview conducted on October 3, 2006, with the Applicants' representative. During the interview, the Appleman reference and distinguishable features of the present invention were discussed in detail. It was noted (in the present invention) that the determination of a user on the blacklist or member list is based on a request for admission to a virtual space, which appears to be distinguishable from Appleman. In Appleman, the determination for admission of a user to a virtual space is automatic based on that user being on a "buddy list." At the conclusion of the interview, it was agreed that the independent claims should be amended to recite this feature and to more clearly distinguish over Appleman.

II. Response To Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 2, 7-11 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Godefroid et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,697,840, hereafter "Godefroid"), Appelman (U.S. Patent No. 6,750,881, hereafter "Appelman") and an article by Gene Steinberg ("Sams Teach Yourself America Online in 10 Minutes," hereafter "Steinberg"). Claims 5 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Godefroid and Steinberg and further in view of DeSimone et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,212,548, hereafter "DeSimone"). The Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claims 1 and 7-9 have been amended consistent with the recommendations made during the Examiner Interview conducted on October 3, 2006. In particular, the independent claims have been amended to more particularly point out that the determination of whether a user is denied or granted admission to another user's virtual space is *based on a request for admission to the virtual space* (see, Applicants' Application, page 2, lines 19-25).

More specifically, an owner of virtual space generates and stores lists (e.g., blacklist and member list) of users that are denied and granted access. Every time a user requests access to the

owner's virtual space, a management server checks the lists. The user is either denied or granted access based on his or her presence on the lists. This feature of the present invention is not believed to be disclosed, taught or suggested by the cited references.

Briefly, Godefroid is directed to a presence awareness in a collaborative system that enables a user to set awareness policies. As correctly noted by the Examiner, Godefroid fails to at least teach or suggest "the storage means or the determining means" of the present invention (see, Office Action, page 2).

Appelman teaches or suggests a real time notification system that tracks, for each user, the logon status of selected co-users via definable "buddy lists." When a user logs on to a system, a user's buddy lists are presented to a buddy list system. The buddy list system will automatically attempt to match co-users currently logged into the system with the user's buddy lists, and displays all matches to the user. Thus, the determination of access to a user's virtual space (by a co-user) appears to be automatic based on the presence of a co-user on the buddy list, not based on a request by the co-user for admission to the virtual space.

Moreover, after a detailed review of Steinberg and DeSimone, the references do not appear to overcome the deficiencies noted above in either Godefroid or Appelman. Therefore, even if it were proper for one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Godefroid, Appelman, Steinberg and DeSimone, the combination still would not teach or suggest all the features recited in claims 1 and 7-9 (as amended).

For at least these reasons, independent claims 1 and 7-9 are believed to be distinguished over the cited prior art. Likewise, dependent claims 2, 5 and 10-13 are also believed to be distinguishable over the cited prior art based on their respective dependencies from independent claims 1 and 9.

III. Conclusion

In light of the above, the Applicants submit that claims 1, 2, 5 and 7-13 are patentable over the prior art of record. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If any additional fees are due in connection with this application as a whole, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct such fees from deposit account no. 02-1818.

Respectfully submitted,

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